

REPORT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICERS ON HARMONIZATION OF A BSE STRATEGY.

Summary

The Senior Animal Health Officials of Mexico, Canada and the United States met in México city on March 17th 2005 to conclude discussions on the establishment of common minimum standards for measures to effectively manage the risk of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in North America. The conclusions reached built on previous meetings that included representatives of the appropriate public health agencies.

These meetings were held to allow the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO's) to develop a science based framework, with the goal of normalizing trade in ruminants and ruminant products within the region and to promote an international BSE strategy consistent with the OIE chapter on BSE. It is the view of the CVOs that the establishment and implementation of equivalent BSE measures in each country will protect public and animal health and provide for the restoration of safe trade.

Minimum Standards

As a result of these meetings, the CVOs have developed a set of minimum standards for BSE measures in North America. These minimum standards will be presented to the appropriate animal health and public health officials in each country for consideration within the respective regulatory processes, and therefore should be considered pre-decisional. This document does not change requirements for products currently being traded.

Specified Risk Materials (SRMs): For export purposes of food for human consumption, the following tissues are considered SRMs which are not allowed in food for human consumption: brain, skull, eyes, trigeminal ganglia, spinal cord, vertebral column, and dorsal root ganglia from cattle over 30 months of age; and tonsils and distal ileum from cattle of any age. SRM removal must be performed in a manner that minimizes the contamination of edible tissues.

Non-ambulatory Disabled Cattle: The slaughter for human consumption of non-ambulatory disabled cattle for export is prohibited.

Currently, both Mexico and Canada have implemented policies prohibiting the slaughter of non-ambulatory disabled cattle for plants exporting to the United States. The United States policy is to condemn all cattle that are non-ambulatory or disabled when presented for slaughter.

The CVOs noted that downers may be excluded from slaughter for reasons not related to BSE. For example, Canada is currently developing regulations that would prohibit the

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transport of disabled animals because of welfare concerns. Additionally, they recognized that alternative measures may provide equivalent protection against BSE. For example, a very young animal (e.g., a veal calf) that is disabled is not likely to be infected with the BSE agent. Likewise, a veterinarian could determine that an older animal has become disabled for an apparent reason, such as an injury during transport to slaughter, that is not consistent with BSE signs. Finally, non-ambulatory animals that are tested with negative result for BSE are not excluded from the food chain in the European Union or Japan.

Stunning: The use of pithing (laceration, after stunning, of central nervous tissue by means of an elongated rod-shaped instrument introduced into the cranial cavity) and air-injection stunning are prohibited.

Mechanical Meat Separation Processes: Appropriate process controls are in place to ensure that products derived from mechanical meat harvesting processes are consistent with SRM exclusion requirements. For example, the mechanical harvesting of meat from the skull and vertebral column of cattle over 30 months of age is prohibited.

Import Controls: Import requirements must recognize that specified products, such as milk, semen, and embryos, can be safely trade regardless of the BSE risk status of the exporting region, while some products should not be traded from any region affected by BSE. For other products, import measures should be based on the relative risk of the exporting region and the relative risk of the product intended for import.

Surveillance: The CVOs reiterated that surveillance focused on the high-risk cattle population is the most effective way to detect BSE if present. An active targeted surveillance program is in place to detect BSE focusing on the total adult cattle population of the region. The current surveillance programs will fully consider any adjustments adopted by the OIE in May of 2005, as well as results from current ongoing surveillance programs.

Ruminant Feed Restrictions: The achievement of effective feed restriction to preclude the amplification or dissemination of the BSE agent, which encompasses the exclusion of ruminant protein (excluding milk and milk products), avoidance of cross-contamination, and the conducting of verification activities.

Animal Identification System: Adequate animal identification is present to ensure the integrity of the surveillance sampling program and successful epidemiological traceback (particularly the ability to trace an animal back to its birth herd or to any subsequent point of exposure). The compatibility of identification systems within the region must be considered as the national systems are developed.

Risk Assessment: Determination of the BSE risk status of the bovine animal population of a country or a zone based on four parts: release assessment, exposure assessment, consequence assessment, and risk estimation.

Trade within North America

The CVOs also considered which products could safely be traded within the region with these minimum standards in place. While the long-term goal is to bring trade conditions for ruminants and ruminant products into line with the provisions of the OIE Code, the CVOs recognized that conditions for regional trade should be established in the shorter term while the minimum standards are being put in place.

Beef and Offal (includes edible and inedible offal)

Trade in beef (boneless and bone-in) and both edible and inedible offal (tissues excluding SRMs) from animals of any age could safely occur given the implementation of effective measures to safeguard public and animal health. The removal of SRMs is the appropriate measure to protect public health, and effective ruminant feed restrictions provide protection against exposure of susceptible animals.

Live Cattle

The implementation of the minimum standards within North America is also relevant to trade in live cattle within the region. The ability to trace and maintain the identity of animals as they move within the region is a key factor. The CVOs agreed that the minimum standards, especially SRM removal and feed restrictions, provided adequate protection to permit the trade of live cattle (both for immediate slaughter and for feeding). Trade in breeding cattle would, be permitted for those animals born after the effective implementation of the feed ban and which can be traced for the herd of origin.

Other live ruminants and their meat and products:

Movement of other ruminants and their derived products (except meat and bone meal from such animals) would not be restricted on account of BSE. As applicable, requirements for live ruminants based on other TSE control programs will be applied.

Camelids and Cervids and their meat and products:

Movement of camelids and cervids and their products would not be restricted on account of BSE.

From cattle of any age, tonsil and distal ileum, and any commodity containing them should not be traded for the preparation of food, feed, fertilizers, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals including biologicals or medical devices. In addition, from cattle that were 30 months of age or older at the time of slaughter, brains, eyes, spinal cord, skull, vertebral column, and derived protein products should not be traded for the preparation of food, feed, fertilizers, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals including biologicals or medical devices.

* Blood and blood products, from cattle which were not subjected to a stunning process, prior to slaughter, with a device injecting compressed air or gas into the cranial cavity, or to a pithing process.

* The eligibility for trade will be further considered by the animal health and public health authorities following the determination adopted by the OIE in May, 2005.

Veterinary Biologics:

Biologics produced for use in any species are not made from bovine SRMs, or have been subject to an individual risk assessment.

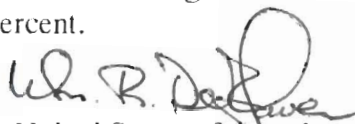
Pet Food:


In the absence of an OIE standard for pet food, bovine origin pet food may be traded based on a risk assessment conducted by the importing country. Pet food of non-bovine origin can be safely traded if verification assurances can be provided by the exporting country.

Protein free tallow and derivatives made from this tallow:

Allow the unrestricted importation and/or transit of protein-free tallow and derivatives (maximum level of insoluble impurities of 0.15 percent in weight). Import and/or transit conditions may require documentation demonstrating that the tallow contains a maximum level of insoluble impurities of 0.15 percent.

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